DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 727 JC 760 608

AUTHOR Anderson, Edward
TITLE Attitudinal and Instructive Notes--Applications in the Community College English Composition Classroom.
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American English; Community Colleges; Course Content; English Education; *Junior Colleges; *Language Instruction; *Nonstandard Dialects; Sociolinguistics; Standard Spoken Usage; *Teaching Methods; Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

Teachers' lack of understanding and knowledge about language and dialects has resulted in unfavorable attitudes and poor instruction in the community college composition classroom. Students' attitudes about the relationship between language and cultural background have been neglected and many Non-Standard English users have developed negative attitudes toward their own use of language. The central thrust of this document is to provide some positive teaching strategies for the English instructor in order to address this problem, and to enhance student awareness of varied rhetorical strategies, dialect interferences, similarities between Standard colloquial oral English and Non-Standard dialects, the relationship between and the diversity of American English dialects, the levels of language usage, and appropriate dialect usage for particular situations. Among the teaching strategies that can be used to the benefit of all students in changing attitudes about language and dialects are: code-switching drills and conversations, word games, oral fluency drills, discussion of the lexical features of American dialects, dictionary consultation, verbal contests, and examination of folk literature. (Author/JDS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED130727

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ATTITUDINAL AND INSTRUCTIVE NOTES--APPLICATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENGLISH COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by
Edward Anderson

Introduction

Those students who use black English or other Non-Standard dialects, black rhetorical skills (or non-main-stream rhetorical skills) and elements of the black folk tradition have often suffered from ridicule in the classroom arising from negative attitudes of educators and mainstream dtudents towards them. Teachers' lack of understanding and knowledge about language and dialects has resulted in unfavorable attidtudes and poor instruction in the community college classroom. Students' attitudes about the relationships between language and cultural background have been neglected. Many Non-Standard English users have also developed negative attitudes towards their own use of language.

Since the basic user of Non-Standard English usually comes from groups other than the mainstream, the attitudes of Standard English users need to be changed. There is a need for more favorable consideration to this problem and also to the so-called culturally deprived, disadvantaged or dull students. Making community college students, teachers and other educators aware of the diversity in dialectal usage in the diverse cultural, occupational, Intellectual, and social atmospheres is a desirable goal that demands sustained study and rapid implementation. The following notes and information aim to present some positive strategies designed to meet some of the training needs for all students, to present needs and ways for changing negative attitudes about those who speak different dialects and have different rhetorical and literary skills than the mainstream, and to improve classroom instruction given by the community college teacher. Such training will benefit all students--the Standard and the Non-Standard English users.

JC 760 608

Part I: Notes For Community College Students

Students should develop knowledge and awareness of the variety of rhetorical, linguistic, and cultural skills of their own and those of others. Students should be given a better image of themselves because of their varying cultural, rhetorical and linguistic backgrounds to help them understand and become sensitive to the dialects used by others in their communities. They need to gain a knowledge of cross-cultural verbal strategies and Non-Standard usage in American English dialects and to gain positive attitudes toward all American dialects.

There is much that students need to learn and to know in order to develop language fluency, to be able to use Standard English when the need arises, and to gain positive attitudes about language used by themselves and by their peers. Students need to become aware of many things in order to gain affirmative attitudes toward language usage and cultural background, to erase stigmas attached to the use of certain Non-Standard dialects and other rhetorial skills than those used by mainstream culture users; and to give them a good general knowledge about language and dialects as they are related to certain cultural backgrounds.

Taking into account the diversity of dialect, language, and cultural background, the following a list of items students need to become aware of:

1. Awareness of the varies rhetorical strategies. (e.g. jiving, shucking, etc.)
2. Awareness of the dialect interferences (code-switching) in written compositions as opposed to those dialect interferences mainly found in oral composition.
3. Awareness of the similarities between Standard colloquial oral English and Non-Standard dialects.
4. Awareness of the concept of language change and its overall effect.
5. Awarness of the nature of the various rhetorical and linguistic styles. (see Martin Joos' "The Styles of the Five Clocks"--frozen, formal, casual,

intimate and consultative.)

6. Awareness of the history and the development of American dialects and American dialect areas.
7. Awareness of the close relationship between American English dialects and dialectal use and the diversity in both.
8. Awareness of the appropriate dialect usage for a particular situation and environmental setting (cultural, educational, social, occupational, and economical).
9. Awareness of the levels of language usage.
10. Awareness of the history and the development of the English language.
11. Awareness of the development of older language forms such as Gullah, early British dialects, and West African dialects.
12. Awareness of the American dialect atlas information.
13. Awarness of the use of language in the mass media--especially the use of Non-Standard English dialects and black verbal strategies.
14. Awareness of the notions (some researched and some impressionistic) about the origins and the development of Non-Standard dialects, particularly black Non-Standard English.
15. Awareness of the features and the usages of the three traditions of black American literature--Folk, Abolitionist., and Plantation.
16. Awareness of the types of Afro-American folk literature.
17. Awareness of the ghetto-based black verbal strategies.
18. Awareness of the aesthetic and educational implications of the black folk literary tradition.
19. Awareness of the need for all speakers (and especially blacks) to use their own dialects.

and other aspects of their own folk (mainly oral) literary tradtion.

The items listed above need to be taught in order to get the mainstream users of Standard English to have more respect for and more positive attitudes towards Non-Standard users of English in social and cultural situations and in regional environments, to make them aware of the appropriate use of Non-Standard and Standard English for certain life situations, and to get them to respect rhetorical and verbal strategies used by certain cultural groups.

These items should also be taught to Non-Standard English users to help them see the value of learning another dialect (i.e., Standard English) for certain eduational, social, occupational and economical reasons, to get them to understand the concept of language and dialect appropriateness, to get them to understand the significance and the value in using their own dialect in certain life situations (social and cultural), and to get them to respect their own rhetorical and verbal strategies.

Part II: Notes for Community College Teachers and Other Educators

The community college English teacher and other school educators should reinforce the following assumptions leading to positive attitudes about dialects, language, and written and oral communication:

1. All languages have system.
2. No one dialect is better than another.
3. All dialects have equal value as means of communication.
4. Non-Standard English dialects have logic, coherence, and grammaticalness.
5. Languages naturally undergo change.
6. Communication in the U.S. in not curtailed by the diversity of American English dialects.

Community college teachers and other educators need to be aware of, apply, and teach the basic principles about American dialects and their relationships to the cultural backgrounds and other rhetorical skills used by their students. They need to change their negative attitudes toward their students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and help thier students to do the same.

What should the community college English teacher do in the classroom with students who have cultural, linguistic, and language diversity? He should teach certain types of information and should exhibit positive and favorable attitudes toward students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and economical backgrounds. The teacher must use positive teaching strategies and evaluation processes, as well as code-switching (from Non-Standard to Standard English) only as a means to an end (i.e., helping students advance socially, educationally and economically.)

It is very important that the teacher have regard for the self-image and the self-esteem of his students.

He should take pride in the diversity of his students and appreciate their individual differences. It is necessary that he emphasize effective and appropriate communication regardless of whatever dialect his students use. He must recognize that there are no dialect errors, but only dialect interferences and that no dialects are sub-standard except from the point of the insensitive and ill-informed. The teacher should make careful distinctions between good English, uneducated English, educated or Standard English, Vernacular English, and Non-Standard English.

The effective community college English teacher can follow a number of useful steps in the upgrading of his instruction in the classroom and in teaching and planning of assignments and activities. He can have respect and acceptance for the oral and written student work in the classroom and can give adequate aid for students' progress in future assignments. Further, the teacher can give more attention to fluency than to correctness in the evaluation of language assignments (oral and written). Teaching respect for and student awareness of cultural and language background and levels of language usage can be another goal of the teacher. He can explain the appropriate use of Non-Standard dialects and expose the limits of instruction that says that all students must always use Standard English for all life situations. In addition, he should not try to eradicate the students' so-called "bad" writing and speaking habits. (i.e., use of Non-Standard English), but he should try to aid the student in acquiring a new and more socially acceptable dialect (i.e., Standard English.)

The effective community college English teacher must establish positive and constructive evaluation methods in dealing with dialect interferences in all classroom assignments and he must also use aural-oral methods in dialect interference instruction. Being aware of, understanding, and planning teaching principles and methods that emphasize dialect interferences found primarily in written composition as opposed to those dialect interferences usually found in speaking (oral composition) can be useful for the teacher.

He should also be aware of the fact that few (if any) people adhere to all of the rules of Standard English all of the time.

Making adequate diagnosis of the dialect of students and adjusting teaching to the students' communication needs and career and other goals (home, community, peer group, occupational, and educational) are definite requirements of all community college English teachers. The teacher's job also should be to understand or to learn and to be able to use dialect patterns of students (mainly Non-Standard) for instructional purposes in applying code-switching teaching situations. There should be consideration of individual differences by using individualized dialect instruction as an emphasis of the teacher. He needs to use group methods with interchange between Non-Standard English speakers and Standard English speakers. He also must encourage the students' use and respect for his own dialect in appropriate situations and provide (mainly oral) means for students to communicate in their own dialects.

The community college English teacher should recognize and build upon the students' existing language structure (dialect and cultural and rhetorical skills). If he is to be effective in the classroom, he must be aware of and accept rhetorical strategies used by various cultural and ethnic groups. By all means he should understand the variety of language usage and cultural or folk communication existing in the community college classroom.

The following methods and techniques might be useful to the community college English composition teacher in the teaching of code-switching and dialectal usage:

Many opponents of the use of Non-Standard English dialect materials as instructional tools see no value in their use. However, such educators, linguists, and anthropologists as Roger Abrahams, Geneva Gay, Joan Baratz, and Roger Shuy are aware of the advantages of the dialectal materials. By first making Non-Standard features as effective means of communication, the

teacher can move on to instructional drills and conversations (code-switching to Standard English by using practical type lessons).

A system of groups of various Non-Standard dialect features such as Substitution, Redundancy, Reducation, Deletion, Omission, and Addition lead the way to establishing certain categorical and variable grammatical and phonological rules. Such Non-Standard rules can be contrasted with Standard English usage. Teaching code-switching with the use of such Non-Standard English dialect rules as opposed to the traditional Standard English rules (found in traditional grammar books) makes the students aware of their present dialectal usage and gives them a basis for their dialect shifting in a way that is not done traditionally. The teacher can drill the code-switching of frequently used Non-Standard features, yet he can make the students aware of the occasional use of some Non-Standard features and the corresponding Standard English dialect features. Oral and written drills are related to communication goals in the classroom. The use of folk literary materials in Non-Standard dialects is used to enrich the code-switching process and also to serve as a means of cultural identity and motivation.

Dialect materials used relate to the students' occupational goals and needs for Standard English usage on the job (oral and written correspondences and composition). The teacher can attempt to establish respect and tolerance for and an acceptance of appropriate Non-Standard English dialect usage in order for the students who use the dialect, as well as for others, to gain confidence in its richness and positive values. If the Non-Standard dialect materials are approached as constructive instructional tools in the community college composition and literature classrooms, they may lead to better communication between Standard and Non-Standard users and also bring about more effective Standard English usage by all members of the classes.

The following is a list of assignments, skills, activities, methods, and techniques that the teacher can use for the benefit of all of his students in changing attitudes about language and dialects, in fluency drills, and in the acquisition of Standard English (when the need arises):

1. Conduct code-switching (Non-Standard to Standard English) drills and conversations (oral and written) via tapes, records, commercial and teacher-made fluency drills and practices, and selected American folk literary materials.
2. Use word games.
3. Conduct oral fluency drills--repetition, substitution, manipulation--and deal with one grammatical or phonological feature at a time.
4. Examine a variety of dictionaries--Oxford English Dictionary, Dictionary of Americanisms, Dictionary of Afro-American Slang.
5. Discuss the lexical features of American dialects--word borrowings and Americanisms.
6. Read and discuss the use of various dialects in folk (American ethnical and racial groups) literature.
7. Conduct verbal contests.
8. Examine the use of language and dialects in the American mass media.
9. Conduct code-switching to emphasize language and dialect appropriateness.
10. Drill pronunciation of contrasting minimal pairs or words.
11. Present oral dialect themes based upon folk literature (from Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath, stories by Ring Lardner, Ernest Gaines, Baldwin, Chesnutt, and other American local color writers).

12. Classify various language strategies and levels of usage through the presentation of oral and written examples of each.
13. Conduct code-switching practices and drills that seek to improve the students' spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, etc.--enhancement of better Standard English and mechanics and usage.
14. Base discussions upon the concept of regional, social, cultural (home, peer group) language and usage and respect for language and dialect divergence.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

DEC 10 1974

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES